



ROBERT L. EHRLICH, JR.
GOVERNOR

STATE HOUSE
100 STATE CIRCLE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-3901
(TOLL FREE) 1-800-811-8336

TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

May 21, 2003

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President of the Senate
State House
Annapolis MD 21401

Dear Mr. President:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, today I am allowing Senate Bill 54 – *Task Force to Study Pinhole Leaks in Copper Plumbing* to become law without my signature.

Senate Bill 54 creates a 13-member Task Force to determine the extent, patterns, and trends of pinhole leaks in Maryland. The Task Force will also investigate the possible causes of pinhole leaks in copper pipes and investigate the effect of the leaks on homeowners' insurance policies. The legislation also sets forth the membership of the Task Force, which includes a representative from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with expertise in water chemistry, and will require the task force to report its findings to the General Assembly by December 31, 2004. The Department of Housing and Community Development will provide the staff and the Governor will appoint the chairman. The Task Force will terminate on January 31, 2005.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) is a bi-county water and sewer agency entrusted to provide safe and reliable water to the residents of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Established in 1918, the Commission was the creation of public health officials and civic activists in response to complaints from the District of Columbia about the polluted water coming into Washington from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. In response to increasing reports of copper pipe pinhole leaks in the spring of 2000, the WSSC launched an internal investigation to discover the reason for the pinholes. To date, WSSC has received over 4,600 complaints from its customers about copper pipe pinhole leaks. The majority of the leaks have occurred in homes built prior to 1970 and in older areas of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.

May 21, 2003

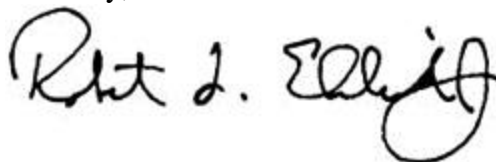
Page 2

Experts have been focusing on possible external causes for the leaks, but more investigating needs to be done. This legislation will allow the task force members, along with the Department of Housing and Community Development to receive the technical expertise necessary to continue the investigation. The Maryland Insurance Administration has indicated that these pinhole leaks have affected the premiums on homeowners' insurance policies.

I allow this bill to take effect with several reservations. While I recognize that this is a concern for all citizens of Maryland, particularly for the residents of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, I have strong reservations as to whether a task force is the proper vehicle to remedy this problem. The WSSC has been vigorously pursuing this issue since it came into existence. Through its internal task forces, I believe that the Commission has utilized its resources and is diligently working to find a solution to the problem for its customers. However, as I have stated on numerous occasions, this Administration is dedicated to forming a streamlined, more efficient government. The plethora of task forces proposed during this legislative session are not representative of the efficient government that I have promised to provide to the citizens of Maryland. This General Assembly also has a responsibility to protect the integrity of this institution and develop real solutions for real problems.

In spite of my reservations about the promulgation of so many task forces, I am allowing Senate Bill 54 to become law without my signature based on the seriousness of the problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor